

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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S E C R E T SANTIAGO 3780

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SHUM, CI
SUBJECT: DINNER WITH GENERAL LEIGH

1. SUMMARY: GENERAL LEIGH'S CIVILIAN ADVISERS ARRANGED A DINNER FOR THE BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR AND ME MAY 16 DURING WHICH LEIGH CONTINUED TO GROUSE AT PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S TRANSITION PLAN BUT PRODUCED NO CLEAR COURSE OF ACTION. LEIGH SAID THAT PINOCHET'S FUTURE RIDES ON THE OUTCOME OF THE LETELIER INVESTIGATION. THE MEAL SEEMED DESIGNED TO SHOW LEIGH THAT HIS ADVISERS HAD CONTACT WITH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. END SUMMARY.

2. JORGE OVALLE AND ALEJANDRO JARA, TWO EX-DEMOCRATIC RADICALS FORMING THE CORE OF AIR FORCE GENERAL LEIGH'S CIVILIAN ADVISERS, ARRANGED A GET-TOGETHER FOR BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR VINCENZI AND ME (WITH WIVES) AN MAY 16. ALTHOUGH OVALLE ADVISED ME IN SOTTO VOCE THAT IN LEIGH I WOULD FIND A "TRUE DEMOCRAT", THE GENERAL STARTED OFF WITH A LONG HARANGUE ON THE "INTERVENTIONIST APPROACH" RECOMMENDED IN A RECENT NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL (THE NYT SUGGESTED MAY 13 THAT THE USG KEEP THE PRESSURE ON THE GOC DESPITE SOME RECENT IMPROVEMENTS).

3. DURING THE EVENING LEIGH REITERATED PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED
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CONCERNS ABOUT THE PINOCHET REGIME, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE DRAWN OUT TRANSITION PLAN AND THE INSENSITIVITY THE GOC HAS SHOWN TOWARD LABOR. ON THE OTHER HAND, LEIGH DENIED AN EFE WIRESERVICE ACCOUNT THAT HE HAS TABLED A COUNTER-PROPOSAL FOR THE TRANSITION PROCESS; HE LIMITED HIMSELF TO REPEATING THAT THE PERIOD SHOULD BE BRIEFER AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES SPELLED OUT. IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW IN "LA TERCERA" NEXT DAY, LEIGH PUBLICLY

AND CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT HE OR HIS TEAM HAD PRESENTED A COUNTER-PROPOSAL FOR THE TRANSITION.

4. LEIGH STRESSED THAT THE UNFOLDING OF THE LETELIER CASE COULD BE DECISIVE FOR PINOCHET. HE THOUGHT THAT ASSISTANT U.S. ATTORNEY PROPPER'S INVESTIGATION AND THE WAY IT WAS HANDLED WOULD DETERMINE WHETHER PINOCHET WOULD BE ABLE TO REMAIN AS PRESIDENT.

5. COMMENT: OVALLE AND JARA APPARENTLY STAGED THE AFFAIR TO PROVE TO LEIGH THAT THEY HAD CONTACT WITH KEY MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. WHAT WAS MISSING WAS A CLEARLY DEFINED PLAN OR PROGRAM. LEIGH'S TEAM GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY WERE PLAYING THE SITUATION BY EAR, HOPING FOR SOME BREAKS (THUS THE RELIANCE ON THE SPINOFF FROM THE LETELIER CASE). LEIGH STILL SEEMS HOPEFUL THAT PINOCHET WILL FIND HIS POSITION INTOLERABLE AND BE FORCED TO RESIGN BUT THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO REMAIN ON THE RE-FORMED JUNTA. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN IS, OF COURSE, THAT LEIGH'S POSITION CONTINUES TO BE VERY VULNERABLE AND HIS SURVIVAL ON THE JUNTA DEPENDS ON GETTING FORTUITOUS BREAKS.
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